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24 February 1964

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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Panama: President Chiari appears to be searching for some method of breaking the current diplomatic impasse without provoking a violent reaction in Panama.

Chiari met with Costa Rican President Orlich late last week, apparently to discuss new proposals on re-establishment of US-Panamanian relations. In the official communiqué concerning the conference, Chiari expressed appreciation for "whatever suggestions Orlich sees fit to submit" to break the deadlock.

Panama is also planning to present a "new formula" for settling the dispute to the OAS when Ambassador Moreno returns to Washington shortly.

In Panama, Chiari has agreed to attend a meeting of publishers today which will consider the possibilities for modifying the virulent anti-US press campaign. The relatively moderate news treatment of the US-Panamanian problem by two Panamanian papers on 22 February was intended as a trial effort to test public reactions.

The business community, which is feeling the pinch of a sharp economic decline, apparently will lend its strong support to the projected reorientation of the press and radio.

Chiari's dilemma remains, however, for any softening of the position his government has maintained might provoke widespread violence by extremists.

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South Vietnam: [General Khanh is attempting to revitalize government operations against the Viet Cong in the face of widespread apathy.]

[Khanh has moved to revive the amnesty program which had bogged down after a promising start early last year. He also intends to create a corps of civil administrators to move in behind military pacification operations. Personnel for this corps are to be drawn largely from Saigon, but leaders of dominant religious and political groups in the affected provinces will be included.]

[an increase in neutralist sentiment in the countryside, where this solution is seen as promising an end to hostilities. Such sentiment is now spreading in Saigon as well, particularly among students who lack confidence in the regime. The commander of the airborne troops claims that morale has dropped in the army and the civil guard as a result of the two recent coups and increasing resistance by well-armed Viet Cong units.]

[Although there is still no firm evidence of new plotting against Khanh, many Vietnamese, including General "Big" Minh, remain embittered by Khanh's arrest of members of the deposed junta.]

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Bolivia: [President Paz is facing increasingly stiff and united resistance in his bid for re-election.]

[Vice President Juan Lechin's pro-Communist followers appear to be trying to ally themselves with both rightist and leftist elements opposed to Paz. Air force commander Barrientos, a defeated aspirant for the vice-presidential nomination who may be working with these groups, was ordered by Paz to leave the country.]

[Paz is also confronted with disaffection within the ruling party, the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement. The cabinet is torn by dissension,]

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[Paz has survived many political crises in his career, however, and probably will do so again.]

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Syria: The situation remains unsettled, although prompt action by the Baathist military regime prevented recent public disturbances from getting out of hand.

Martial law was re-established on 23 February following an outbreak of rioting the day before in Homs, north of Damascus. The regime quelled another disturbance last week in the coastal city of Baniyas.

These developments are a measure of the growing unpopularity of the Baathist regime, in which military leaders have recently assumed an increasingly prominent role.

Although opposition elements appear to be gaining confidence, no opposition group appears well enough organized yet to carry out a coup against the regime.

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NOTES

India: For the third consecutive year, food grain output apparently will fail to keep pace with India's annual population increase of over ten million. Adverse weather is the principal cause, but mismanagement of the country's agricultural development programs is also an important factor. Further increases in food prices and a heavy drain of buffer PL-480 stocks may result, making requests for additional surplus food from the United States likely.

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USSR-Bulgaria: A new Soviet credit of \$333 million to Bulgaria is the largest economic aid commitment Moscow has made to any country since 1961. These credits, announced at the end of Premier Zhivkov's recent visit to Moscow, presumably will be used to support Sofia's new five-year plan which is scheduled to begin in 1966.

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Dahomey: Paris' intervention in Gabon has heightened anti-French sentiment in Dahomey. Trade unionists in Cotonou say they have planned a large protest demonstration before the French Embassy sometime today or tomorrow. They also claim they intend to initiate demands for the closing of French military bases and the withdrawal of French troops.

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